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Viewing cable 09STOCKHOLM679, WHO IS SWEDISH PRIME MINISTER FREDRIK REINFELDT?

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SUBJECT: WHO IS SWEDISH PRIME MINISTER FREDRIK REINFELDT?

Classified By: A/DCM Laura Kirkconnell for reasons 1.4 (B) & (D).

1. (C) Summary: As Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt heads to Washington, we wanted to give you some background on this

composed and reflective individual. This cable draws on personal observations of Post personnel and a review of recent public documents, and sketches Reinfeldt's most salient personal and professional traits.

-- Reinfeldt is composed, reflective, and committed to the goal of methodically reforming Sweden's welfare state. He is more comfortable operating and maneuvering behind the scenes, letting his political partners and subordinates take the spotlight;

--Reinfeldt's overriding goal is to keep his alliance of center-right, non-socialist coalition partners together and focus on the economy and domestic issues in order to get reelected in 2010;

-- The Swedish EU Presidency has compelled Reinfeldt to take a stance on EU related issues, in particular on climate change and the Lisbon Treaty.

-- His close advisors tell us that Reinfeldt feels strongly "in his heart" that something productive can be achieved on climate change at the December COP-15 conference if nations deviate from politics as usual.

The Politician Wets His Feet

¶2. (SBU) Reinfeldt's leadership style of avoiding confrontation and building consensus is in part the result of learned lessons from days as the leader of the Youth Association of the Moderate Party (MUF). In comparison to the mature Reinfeldt, the young Reinfeldt was more vocal and controversial, writing a series of articles and books in which he openly criticized the Swedish welfare state and Moderate Party leadership. When the Moderates were ousted from power in 1994, Reinfeldt called for diversification of the closed party leadership. He accused the party leaders of being elitist, which sparked internal debate and led to personal attacks on Reinfeldt by the party leaders, including Bildt, closing him out of the leadership's inner-circle. Reinfeldt retreated from the spotlight and traveled around the country gathering support at the local level of the Moderate Party. He reemerged in 2002 after the worst electoral Moderate Party showing, in which the party lost half its support. As one of the several younger, progressive "new" Moderates, he quickly was elected to the party's executive committee.

¶3. (C) The composed and reflective Reinfeldt is more comfortable operating and maneuvering behind the scenes, letting his political partners and subordinates take the spotlight. While non-confrontational in public, Reinfeldt has demonstrated decisiveness and resoluteness when necessary in the three years since taking office. Reinfeldt constantly keeps his eye on the end the result and adjusts strategy to achieve his goals. The Prime Minister, who builds relationships based on mutual trust, prefers to keep a low profile and use a small cadre of mostly young assistants to keep him firmly at the center of his diverse Cabinet. He tends to be methodical, orderly, and bides his time with initiatives until he can nurture widespread appeal for them.

¶4. (SBU) Reinfeldt and his "New Moderates" draw much of their political inspiration from the success of Tony Blair's New Labor and the Clinton Democrats. Reinfeldt took power in 2006 by bringing the Moderates to the center of the political spectrum. He advocated self-reliance and entrepreneurship and dispelled fears that his government would dismantle Sweden's generous system of social services. A biographer of Reinfeldt described him recently as "a puritan" who wants people to work and support themselves. The Prime Minister lists George Orwell's "1984" as influencing his views on individual freedom and the role of the state. His policy positions aim to strike a balance between the traditional role of the welfare state and the importance of the private enterprise to empower people to help themselves, a view shaped by the difficulties his entrepreneur parents

experienced. He has introduced major personal income tax cuts, but he is not an economic liberal. He is in favor of the welfare state, with tax funded services, but supports privatization of state-run services. He has also modernized the Moderate's agenda, including environmental protection and

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equality.

Reinfeldt's Future Steps

15. (C) As party leader, Reinfeldt's political strategy has been to win at least two consecutive elections, according to one his biographers. To this end, Reinfeldt balances his political agenda welfare state reform with the desire to again win over the electorate in 2010. This is a difficult task to accomplish in a society that for 65 of the past 72 years has elected a center-left government. With the Swedish economy expected to contract by 5.2 percent in 2009 and unemployment expected to rise to 11.6 percent by 2011 as a result of the global economic downturn, the domestic economy has been the focus for the Prime Minister and his charismatic Finance Minister, Anders Borg-- one of the key players that worked with Reinfeldt to evolve the party into the "New Moderates."

16. (C) Reinfeldt and Bildt are not friendly political allies, and have a mutual agreement that the more experienced Bildt will lead on vital foreign policy issues, such as Iran and Afghanistan. Appointing his one time rival allows Reinfeldt to focus exclusively on keeping his coalition partners together and implementing domestic reforms. To a certain extent, the Swedish EU Presidency has compelled a reluctant Reinfeldt to take on a larger role on the international stage, especially on climate change and the Lisbon Treaty. Because of both his personal belief in the urgency of addressing climate change, and his political goal to win over an electorate that consistently gives top priority to environmental issues, Reinfeldt has made achieving progress at the COP-15 conference in Copenhagen the top goal of Sweden's EU Presidency. He hailed President Obama's election as a "historic decision" that, among other things, allowed the U.S. to start anew on climate change policy. In an uncharacteristic manner, Reinfeldt has publicly pressured Czech President Vaclav Klaus to sign the Treaty after Klaus raised new demands that would delay the Treaty's implementation. Reinfeldt's experience with consensus-building suits him well to temporarily lead the 27 EU Member States and his success as an effective international leader improves his chances of reelection in 2010.

The Reserved Family Man

17. (C) Even Moderate party members known very little about Reinfeldt's private life. He projects himself as the quintessential humble family man*-an image that has worked well to distance himself from the elitist image of his predecessors. His wife Fillippa is a very active local Moderate politician who sits on Stockholm's regional committee and oversees health-care policy. She is Reinfeldt's closest confidant and probably shapes his political views. They met in the MUF and she has had significant influence in managing Reinfeldt's political campaigns. Reinfeldt speaks fondly of his mother who as a management consultant probably first introduced Reinfeldt to strategies on how to cope with stress, multitask, and enlist cooperation. His mother was a management consultant and his father ran a training firm.

18. (C) Reinfeldt enjoys doing housework, including cleaning to reduce the exposure of his allergy-prone kids to dust. Reinfeldt, a former amateur basketball player, is known to follow basketball and attend soccer and ice hockey games. He

is a fan of ABBA. He drinks very little, perhaps as result of his father's rumored alcohol problems, and if offered the occasional drink, does not chose hard alcohol. Reinfeldt is known to have a good "dry" sense of humor among his closest friends.

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